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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7176
INFO RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3245
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0564
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0525
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7512
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5674
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4111
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1552
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4152
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3246
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8107
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5706
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2442
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001534

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR SCA/INS. USAPACOM FOR J4.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MOPS PREL PTER PGOV CE

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESENTS RADARS AND RIB BOATS TO SRI LANKAN MILITARY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador handed over to the Sri Lankan Navy Commander a radar-based maritime surveillance system and ten Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats in a ceremony on November 8 at the Trincomalee Base today. In his public remarks, the Ambassador explained that the equipment was transferred under Section 1206 of the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act, the purpose of which is to develop and support the military capacity of partner nations to deter terrorist activity. The Ambassador also underlined the importance the U.S. attaches to human rights and a negotiated settlement to Sri Lanka's conflict. The Navy Commander thanked the USG for its assistance. He predicted that the new radar system, coupled with High Frequency Surface Wave Radars from Raytheon Canada, would help Sri Lanka to improve substantially its efforts to detect and stop illegal LTTE arms and other shipments. He also expressed concern that the LTTE would make increased use of fishing boats from Tamil Nadu to smuggle weapons and other supplies into the LTTE-controlled area. End summary.

BACKGROUND

¶12. (SBU) The Ambassador explained that the maritime surveillance system was transferred under the National Defense Authorization Act, Section 1206. The surveillance system has a number of components, anchored by two command centers in Colombo and Trincomalee. There are eight fixed censor sites, five repeater sites, and one transportable site deployed around Sri Lanka that feed information on maritime activity into these two command centers. The system has a wide radar surveillance capability of shipping lane approaches in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal. The system provides the Sri Lankan Navy with a clear picture of what is occurring within its maritime area of responsibility. The total cost of the system was USD \$10.8 million.

¶13. (U) The ten Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs) also were transferred under the National Defense Appropriations Act, Section 1206. The boats are highly maneuverable, are able to reach 30 knots, and are

capable of carrying 7-10 people. Cummins Diesel engine is their power source. The boats have GPS and radios on board. Weapon mountings are available, but no weapons were provided by the U.S. The boats are meant to enhance maritime surveillance and interdiction capability of Sri Lanka Navy. The total cost of the package including spare engines and other spare parts was USD \$1.6 million. Basic familiarization and maintenance training was provided by a U.S. civilian technical team in September, 2007. More advanced training is been planned.

¶4. (U) In his public comments the Ambassador said the significance of the radars from the US perspective: "The U.S. hopes these radars will help send a message to the LTTE that it will be harder and harder for them to re-arm themselves and continue their murderous activities and that now is the time to lay down their arms and renounce terrorism. But such a strategy will only work if the government of Sri Lanka does its part to seek a peaceful solution. While the United States supports Sri Lanka's right to defend itself against terrorism, military action by itself will not end this terrible conflict that has divided your beautiful country for 25 years. The answer in our view lies in a negotiated settlement that will meet the aspirations of the Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim communities." The Ambassador also noted the importance the U.S. attaches to human rights: "Let me also take this opportunity to urge the Government of Sri Lanka to respect fully human rights. There is great concern in the U.S. about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. Continued human rights abuses are likely to jeopardize the kind of cooperation we are commemorating today."

Next Steps

COLOMBO 00001534 002 OF 002

¶5. (SBU) In FY 08 the Government of Sri Lanka is in negotiations to purchase High Frequency Surface Wave Radars (HFSWR) from Raytheon Canada to increase the surveillance capability on the south coast. The GSA has also requested a HFSWR from Raytheon U.S. for the west coast under U.S. National Defense Authorization Act, Section 1206. The Commander expressed his hope that the Canadian radar would be operational and fully linked into the two operations centers funded by the US by the end of the first quarter of calendar year 2008.

Indian Fishermen Still A Gap

¶6. (SBU) Asked how he expects the LTTE to react to the new capabilities of the Sri Lankan Navy provided by the U.S., the Commander predicted that the LTTE would likely increase its reliance on supplies from Indian fishermen who fish in the waters south of the Jaffna peninsula and north of Mannar. He showed the US delegation photographs of the hundreds of Indian fishing boats that fish on a daily basis in that area, many of them inside the territorial waters of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Navy does not have the capability to search all of these vessels, some of which land supplies for the LTTE, others which rendezvous with LTTE vessels at sea. He commented that the Sri Lankan Government meets twice a year with the Indian Government to try to address this problem but has made little headway.